Who We Are
The National Healthy Start Association is the membership organization for federal Healthy Start programs.

What is the Healthy Start Initiative
The federal Healthy Start initiative (Healthy Start) is the Health Resources and Services Administration Maternal and Child Health Bureau’s signature community-based and community-driven program focused on reducing infant mortality.

Who Does Healthy Start Serve
Healthy Start participants experience persistent health disparities, which stem from issues directly related to health equity and social justice. Healthy Start program sites are in communities where the infant mortality rate is at least 1.5 times that of the U.S. national average.

The Maternal Health Crisis
The United States has the highest rate of maternal deaths compared to 45 other developed countries. Each year, approximately 700 women die from pregnancy-related complications. Furthermore, for every woman that dies, 70 women experience a “near miss” which can cause mental health trauma, significant health challenges and disability.

3 in 5 (60%) of maternal deaths in the U.S. can be prevented

1/3 OF PREGNANCY-RELATED DEATHS
- happen at delivery or in the week after
- happen 1 week to 1 year postpartum
- happen during pregnancy
Pregnancy-Related Mortality Racial Disparities

Non-Hispanic Black women were at 80% greater risk of postpartum readmission. Black women were more likely to suffer severe maternal morbidity during readmission. Black women were more likely to suffer life-threatening complications such as pulmonary edema and acute heart failure.

Postpartum Readmission Racial Disparities

Racial disparities also exist in postpartum readmission rates. Between 2012-2014, compared with Non-Hispanic White women:
- Non-Hispanic Black women were at 80% greater risk of postpartum readmission.
- Black women were more likely to suffer severe maternal morbidity during readmission.
- Black women were more likely to suffer life-threatening complications such as pulmonary edema and acute heart failure.

Maternal Mental Health

Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders (PMADs) are a group of symptoms that can affect women during pregnancy and the postpartum period, causing emotional and physical problems that make it hard to enjoy life and function well.
- PMADs are common, treatable and can occur at any time during pregnancy or in the first year after pregnancy.
- One in five women suffer from symptoms of depression and/or anxiety in the perinatal period.
- One in 10 dads suffer from postpartum depression.

Medicaid Access and Expansion

Medicaid coverage is an access-to-care issue. From the beginning of a pregnancy, Medicaid pays for medical care for pregnant women until 60 days after they give birth; however, this does not cover all the needs of a pregnant woman postpartum.
- The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 addresses the gap in Medicaid eligibility beyond the 60 days, particularly for those states with expanded Medicaid. This act expands Medicaid from 60 days to 12 months. States can file a State Plan Amendment (SPA) to their Medicaid program to be granted this expansion, which goes into effect April 1, 2022, and is available for five years.
- This extended coverage will provide and improve access to postpartum care which covers a wide range of important health needs that includes recovery from childbirth, following up on pregnancy complications, management of chronic health conditions, access to family planning services and addressing mental health conditions, many of which are the contributors to maternal death up to one year post birth.

References